



STATE SENATOR • LIZ BRATER • 18TH DISTRICT

# Brater Press Release

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## BRATER WORKS TO STRENGTHEN HATE CRIMES LEGISLATION

LANSING—Proactively addressing one of Michigan's leading civil rights issues, Senators Liz Brater (D-Ann Arbor) and Virg Bernero (D-Lansing) this week introduced legislation that would further protections for hate crimes committed against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community (LGBT).

"We have an obligation to ensure fair and equal treatment for all people at all times," said Brater. "For too long, our laws have ignored the real and reprehensible crimes perpetrated against individuals because of their private lives."

Under Michigan's current hate crime law, a convicted offender can receive up to two years in prison for harassing someone because of their race, color, religion, gender, or national origin. These laws do not extend to harassment due to sexual orientation, yet members of the LGBT community are among the most targeted groups for hate crimes.

Crimes targeting a person because of bigotry not only injure the central victim but also attempt to intimidate and an entire subset of the population. Hatred toward the LGBT community is no more acceptable than hatred because of religion or ethnicity."

The newly introduced legislation includes to bills, on adding "sexual orientation, gender identity or expression" in the list of characteristics that define a hate crime, and one revising the relevant sentencing guidelines.

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*State Senator Brater represents Senate District 18 which includes the cities of Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Chelsea, the Villages of Barton Hills and Dexter, and the following townships: Ann Arbor, Augusta, Dexter, Freedom, Lima, Lyndon, Northfield, Salem, Scio, Sharon, Superior, Sylvan, Webster and Ypsilanti. She is the minority vice chair of the natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee and the Agriculture, Forestry, and Tourism Committee.*